



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
1201 NE Lloyd Blvd, Ste 900  
Portland, Oregon 97232

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October 1, 2006

**Action Due: October 31, 2006**

OREGON BULLETIN NO. OR-250-2007-1

Subject: Attendance at Meetings and Purchase of Food at Meetings or Award Ceremonies

1. Purpose: This bulletin sets out policy for NRCS Oregon employee's attendance at meetings sponsored by federal agencies, state and local government organizations and non-governmental organizations. For the purpose of this bulletin, the term meetings includes events such as conferences, congress, conventions, seminars, symposiums and workshops. It also sets out policy on the purchase of food or refreshments at meetings, ceremonies etc. where government employees or the public is in attendance.

2. Expiration Date: September 30, 2007.

3. Attendance at meetings: Congress has passed a number of laws that govern federal employee attendance at meetings. Under current laws, NRCS employees may attend non-government organization sponsored meetings at government expense if two conditions exist:

- if the meeting is part of an authorized training program
- if it is related to agency functions or agency management

Employees may attend meetings sponsored by federal or State and Local government agencies if the following conditions exist:

- the expenditure of travel and training funds must make a direct contribution to the NRCS Oregon fund to be charged.
- the expenditure of the funds must not be prohibited by law.

4. The most common meetings, sponsored by both government and non-government organizations, attended by NRCS employees on an annual basis for training or agency representation purposes are listed in Attachment A. Annually, supervisors will ensure that any of the meetings listed in Attachment A that their employees need to attend are added to their Individual Development Plan (IDP) during the employee's annual performance review. Once the meetings are listed on the IDP, supervisors are to list the meetings and attendees on the form in Attachment B and submit to the State Administrative officer no later than October

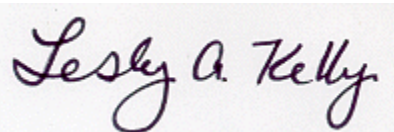


31 annually. The SAO will verify that the meetings are on the list in Attachment A and submit to the State Conservationist for approval. Approved request forms will be returned to the supervisor so that travel arrangements may be made.

5. Supervisors should request approval for their employee's attendance at meetings that arise on a one-time basis or are not listed In Attachment A using the One Time Meeting Approval form in Attachment C. The form will be sent to the State Administrative Officer for funds approval and forwarding to the State Conservationist for approval. The form will include the signature of the supervisor certifying that the expense is necessary and the meeting has been added to the Individual Development Plan.
6. Guidelines for holding Consortia Meetings and Workshops in the West Region are contained in Attachment D. If NRCS Oregon employees are involved in planning and requesting a meeting for one of these consortia, the procedures in Attachment should be followed.
7. Requests to hold meetings where the total cost will be \$7500 or less may be approved by the State Conservationist. Requests to hold meetings with a total cost exceeding \$7500 must be sent to the Regional Assistant Chief for approval by the Deputy Chief for Management. All meeting requests must be submitted with all the forms completed in Attachment E to the State Administrative Officer for a recommendation of concurrence/non-concurrence to the State Conservationist.
8. Purchase of Food or Refreshments at Meetings and Ceremonies: As a general rule, appropriated funds may **not** be used to provide meals, snacks, and refreshments to government employees, unless they are in travel status, or meet the following exceptions:
  - a. NRCS may pay for food at NRCS-sponsored meetings if the purpose of the meeting is for training concerning aspects of the agency's mission, and the majority of the attendees are in training status. These meetings must be on an intermittent basis and cannot be used for day-to-day routine business meetings. Meeting approval, including the food and lodging expenses, must be requested with the forms included in Attachment E.
  - b. For meetings sponsored by a non-government organization, the employee will commonly be charged a fee, usually a registration fee. If a single fee is charged covering both attendance and meals and no separate charge is made for meals, NRCS is allowed to pay the full fee. If a separate charge is made for meals, the government may pay for the meals if it can be documented that the meals are incidental to the meeting, that the attendance of the employee at the meals is necessary to full participation in the business of the conference and that the employee is not free to take the meals elsewhere without being absent from essential formal

discussions, lectures, speeches, etc. All three conditions must be met for NRCS to pay.

- c. When NRCS is authorized to pay for meals in the circumstances in paragraphs a. and b. above, the employee normally cannot be reimbursed for purchasing alternate meals. Employees are responsible for arranging for acceptable substitute meals if their personal taste does not accommodate eating meals paid for by the government. Personal taste is not considered a factor in a decision to reimburse for meals, however, *bona fide* medical or religious reasons for not eating the meals can be considered by the approving official. For an employee on travel or temporary duty status where the government is paying for meals, their MI&E will be reduced by the values of the meals provided.
  - d. The rules above **do not** apply to day-to-day routine agency-sponsored meetings, because employees can not be furnished free food at their official duty station. GSA has described "day-to-day" business meetings as meetings that involve discussions of the internal procedures or operations of the agency.
9. Food at award ceremonies: NRCS appropriations may be used to provide refreshments at award ceremonies under the Government Employees' Incentive Awards Act of 1997. NRCS is authorized to use its operating appropriations to cover "the necessary expense for the honorary recognition of" the employee or employees receiving the awards.
10. If further clarification of these rules is necessary, please contact the Financial Management staff or the State Administrative Officer prior to making any arrangements for food at meetings to avoid improper purchases or expenses.



LESLEY A. KELLY  
State Administrative Officer

Attachments

DIST:  
AE

## **NRCS Oregon List of Annual Meetings**

1. OACD Convention
2. National Organization of Professional Black NRCS Employees?
3. Asian Pacific Islander Organization Training Conference(APIO)
4. American Indian Alaska Native Employees Association (AIANE) Training Conference
5. National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNRCSE) Annual Conference
6. National Civil Rights Committee Meetings
7. Meeting of the Society for Range Management (SRM)
8. National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) Annual Meeting
9. Soil and Water Conservation Society Meeting
10. National Leadership Team Meetings

## **NRCS Oregon Annual Meeting Request Form**

Staff or Basin: \_\_\_\_\_

List of Annual Meetings this Fiscal Year Employees Need to Attend:

Name of Meeting	Dates of Meeting	Attendees	Justification
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **NRCS Oregon One-Time Meeting Attendance Approval Form**

1. Date of Request: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Date of Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Name of Meeting:  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Employees Attending:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Justification for Attendance:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Approved:\_\_\_\_\_

## **Guidelines for Holding Consortia Meetings and Workshops West Region**

### **Process for Requesting Consortia meetings/workshops**

1. Consortium members recommend holding a meeting/workshop and establish meeting objectives.
2. Consortium prepares written justification, proposed dates and location, and proposed budget following guidelines below. Considerations during the planning phase include:
  - a. Holding a teleconference or net meeting in lieu of a face-to-face meeting
  - b. Holding the NRCS meeting in conjunction with a national conference where most consortium members are likely to be attending
  - c. Selecting a least cost site/location/agenda for the proposed meeting
3. Consortium Mentor concurs with recommendation.
4. Consortium Chair (or Mentor) submits written recommendation, including meeting objectives, proposed justification, proposed budget, and proposed agenda to West Region Technology Work Group for concurrence.
5. West Region Technology Work Group concurs with recommendation and adds meeting/workshop to WRTWG Business Plan.
6. WRLT approves Business Plan.
7. If approved by WRLT and the estimated cost is greater than \$7,500, consortium completes meeting approval form (SCS-FNM-72 as described in GM Title 250, Part 406) and submits to the National Office (Deputy Chief for Management) for approval. If estimated cost is greater than \$25,000, other special provisions apply. If a meeting of seven or more employees requires the payment of transportation expenses, a cost-benefit analysis must be conducted and kept on file.
8. Once approved, host state works with Consortium members to plan, organize and hold the meeting.

### **Guidelines for Justifying a Consortium Meeting or Workshop**

A consortium meeting or workshop should include provisions for:

1. Training for consortium members. Training needs should be identified in each employee's Employee/Individual Development Plan
2. Developing specific work products needed by state/field offices that support the Chief's strategic planning priorities (e.g. Farm Bill, Human Capital, Partners, Market-based Approach, Watershed Approach, Energy, and Air Quality).
  - a. Example products:
    - i. Reviewing and preparing a unified response to new practice standards
    - ii. Developing technical assessment tools
    - iii. Air Quality Planning Guides
    - iv. Job Sheets

v. Market based strategies  
D

Attachment

3. Developing and implementing a consortium business plan
4. Coordinating technical input to delivery of Farm Bill programs (e.g. coordinating technical standards, protocols, and products across state lines/MLRA boundaries)
5. Coordinating implementation of agency policies across state/MLRA boundaries
6. Developing strategies to address new technologies or resource issue areas

Justification should also include:

1. Written rationale for why a face-to-face meeting is needed in lieu of a teleconference or net meeting
2. Written rationale for selection of proposed dates and location

**Items to include in Proposed Budget**

1. Estimated number of attendees
2. Number of days of meeting/travel
3. Estimated travel/per diem costs
4. Meeting room costs
5. Supplies
6. Other miscellaneous costs – printing, etc.
7. Proposed source of funds – e.g. state budgets, or national or regional sources

Attachment D